Serious Case Review Learning Bulletin

This learning bulletin outlines the learning from the Overview Report for Young Person Rachel that was published by SSCB on 8th November 2017 . The SSCB expects that this bulletin will be used by every team in every setting to review the team's practice against the learning, identify what the team needs to do and engage actively in transforming practice.

Theme of SCR	Vulnerable adolescent/ risk taking behaviours/missing from home/drug and alcohol misuse/self-harm/sexual exploitation /sexual abuse
Date Published	Wednesday 8th November 2017

Case details :

Family History
- The family is White British with English being their first language
- YP Rachel parents separated and absent Father
- Family came to the attention of services from an early age
- All children had complex needs
- Issues of parental neglect, emotional and physical care of children and leaving children with a slightly older family member
- Subject to child protection plan twice, child in need plan, and secure accommodation order

Young Person Rachel
- Born 1999
- Likely to have experienced sexual abuse in early years
- Demonstrated harmful sexual behaviour at early age
- Diagnosed with ADHD and had complex needs and behavioural issues
- Missed out on education
- Risk taking behaviour including drug misuse, associating with sex offenders, going missing, sexual activity, self-harm and sexual exploitation

Key Points of Learning:

Indicators of risk and vulnerability:
- Experienced long standing neglect
- Poor quality of parental care
- Drug misuse, sex offender association, missing from home, sexual activity, sexually exploited, self-harming
- Inconsistent multi agency support provided to family with numerous professionals involved
- Lack of holistic assessment of needs
- Focus on ADHD distracted professionals from assessing and seeking a better understanding of Young Person Rachel's needs and experiences
- Lack of "safe" placements for Rachel – national issue

Findings from the Review
Finding 1: Without robust multi-agency assessment, which focus on the child's care and experiences within the family, the needs of children who have been diagnosed with a 'condition' may be overlooked

Finding 2 - Child Sexual Abuse in the family environment will often come to the attention of statutory and non-statutory agencies as a result of a secondary presenting factor, which then becomes the focus of intervention. If professionals are not skilled and confident in their ability to identify child sexual abuse, children may be left at risk

Finding 3: Without a purposefully designed multi-agency risk assessment tool, embedded within all organisations and accessed through a single point of access, professional

judgments about risk are more likely to be flawed, and this will reduce the likelihood of effective interventions leaving some young people vulnerable.

Finding 4: When concerns are raised about a child, a clear chronology of events can show agencies where risks lie but unless practitioners understand how to build and maintain purposeful chronologies, and without clear systems to gather, record and share this information, the use of **chronologies** to inform good assessments and decision making is less likely to happen.

Finding 5: Multi Agency assessments and planning are key to supporting better outcomes for children and young people but this requires close collaboration between agencies and inevitably raises the question of who takes responsibility of coordinating this work. Multi-Agency collaboration did not work as well as it should have done with Rachel and this left her vulnerable.

New Finding 6: The range and nature of adolescent risks are different to those facing younger children and the traditional response to such risks does not necessarily fit with young people's lived experience and research. The identification of a multi- agency framework with clearly defined underpinning principles would support better practice for those professionals working with adolescents at risk of harm.

New Finding 7: If authentic and sufficiently intensive long term relationships are not part of the service response to young people, and professionals are not actively supported to invest time in establishing these relationships, then interventions to reduce risk and promote resilience in young people is likely to be ineffective.

Recommendations for SSCB

Recommendation 1: SSCB should

> a) Strengthen skills and knowledge base of the children's' workforce so that professionals are better equipped to recognise and respond to sexual abuse within the family network by March 2018

> b) Ensure whether services to young children with harmful sexual behaviour are proportionate and timely and are delivered in such a way as to reduce the risk of this behaviour continuing into adolescence and adulthood by July 2018.

Recommendation 2 (finding 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7)

> In order to improve the effectiveness of multi-agency practice with adolescents who are at risk due to substance misuse and other forms of risk taking behaviour and/or abuse/exploitation, SSCB should:

> a) Work with the Children's Strategic Partnership, the Safer Sunderland Partnership, and the Sunderland Safeguarding Adult Board to develop a multi-agency framework to support the development of resilience and improve outcomes for vulnerable adolescents. This framework should include:

> - A strategy, robust systems, protocols, and tools for working with vulnerable

adolescents

- Workforce Development opportunities to support staff to engage effectively with young people, better assess and understand issues of risk such as CSE, substance misuse, and transition.

This will be in place by June 2018.

The Overview Report was published on 8th November 2017 alongside two other SCRs, one regarding neglect and the other regarding serious harm to a teenager. The report and accompanying documents can be accessed at SSCB SCRs and Documents